Chapter- 3

PILGRIMAGE TOURISM IN BIHAR: AN OVERVIEW
PILGRIMAGE TOURISM IN BIHAR: AN OVERVIEW

Bihar is the third most populous and the 12th largest State in India, having numerous historical sites and well-known pilgrimage sites of local, national and international repute. The nomenclature of Bihar indicates its antiquity and has been derived from the ancient word "VIHARA" meaning monastery. In the Hindi language the word Bihar (i.e. Vihara) means a college (San, 2002). Geographically, Bihar is situated between 24°-20' to 27°-31' North latitude and 83°-19' to 88°-17' East longitude in the eastern part of the country. Its geographical area is 94,163 sq. km. The total population of the State is 10.38 Crores and its population density is 1102 person per sq KM. (Directorate of Economics & Statistics 2011, GOB). Bihar shares its boundary with the Uttar Pradesh in the west, West Bengal in the east, newly carved state of Jharkhand in the south and an international boundary with Nepal in the north. At present the state has 38 districts. The districts are further divided into 101 subdivisions and 534 blocks. Patna is the capital city of Bihar. The following figure shows the location of Bihar in India.

Figure 3.1: Map of India and Bihar

Source: www.mapsofindia.com and http://gov.bih.nic.in/Profile/default.htm

Bihar is the home of Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain and Christian. Its congenial atmosphere has offered equal opportunities for the development and enrichment of people of all faiths. The religious tolerance of the people is quite evident by the architectures of different religious communities scattered across Bihar.
Mandir, Masjid, Gurudwara, Shrines, caves and kunds are part and parcel of the cultural life of Bihar. Following diagram shows the %age distribution of religious communities in total population of Bihar.

**Figure 3.2: Distribution of Population in Bihar Religion wise (2001 census)**

![Diagram showing %age distribution of Population of Bihar according to Religion](image)

*Source: Bihar at a Glance 2011, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Bihar, Patna*

The above diagram shows the distribution of population religion wise. It is observed that overwhelming majority of the population i.e. 83.23 per cent is Hindu, followed by the population of Muslim (16.53 per cent). The other religions like Buddhist, Sikh, Jain, Christian etc constitute very negligible proportions of the total population. Paradoxically the pilgrimage sites of these religions are dominant in importance as well as in scale. A large number of places in the Indian state of Bihar have considerable importance in the history of Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and Sufism. Bihar is also dotted with numerous sites associated with the Hindu mythology and the legend of Ram and Sita. Therefore, tourism attractions of Bihar are predominantly religious in nature. The landscape of Bihar is dotted with multi-religious sacred spots. It is the land which is also privileged of being the birth place of three Jain Tirthankars (12th, 20th and 24th) and the 10th and last Sikh Guru Gobind Singh. The land of Bihar is also associated with the holy persons of Muslim Sufi saints and their tombs are being considered as sacred places. Bihar was the home of Ashoka, the greatest name in the Buddhist world next only to that of Lord Buddha who raised Buddhism from the position of local sect to that of a world religion (Diwakar, 1959). Ashoka, the emperor of the Mauryan Dynasty, made Buddhism the state religion (Schellinger and Salkin, 1997). The age of Ashoka ushers in the golden age of Buddhism (Pathak, 1989). The following figure shows the major important pilgrimage attractions of Bihar.
Figure 3.3: Map of Bihar showing Major Pilgrimage Destinations

Source: Researcher's Sketch

Pilgrimage tourism attraction of Bihar encompasses the places associated with religious personalities of different religions like Lord Buddha, Lord Mahavir, Jain Tirthankaras, Muslim Sufi saints, Guru Gobind Singh and Hindu religious belief. Although these sacred places are scattered across the state, they are concentrated only in few districts of the state viz. Patna, Gaya, Nalanda and Vaishali. The cultural landscape of Bihar is characterized by the presence of monuments and pilgrimage centers of Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Jains, Sikhs and Christian. It unequivocally manifests the beauty of composite culture of Bihar where all religions thrived in harmony and peace. The cultural wealth of Bihar is not only limited to its architectures and pilgrimage sites but it is also about its natural landscape and the charm of everyday life including market place, ritual and festivals, crafts, paintings, music and cuisines. The pilgrimage centers of Bihar also act as the tourist attractions like elsewhere in the world and attract both pilgrims and tourists by virtue of their archeological, historical and religious importance.
3.1 Tourist Traffic in Bihar

The survival of any tourism destination depends upon the regular and steady inflow of tourist at destination. The volume of tourist arrival at destination is considered one of the indicators of tourism development. The pattern of tourist arrival is an important indicator of prevailing demand of pilgrimage tourism of Bihar. The flow of tourist has gone up remarkably from the year 2001 to 2012.

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
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Source: Researcher's compilation from Department of Tourism, Govt. of Bihar & India Tourism Statistics – 2012, Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India
Figure 3.4 - Foreign Tourist Visit in Bihar

Foreign Tourist Visit in Bihar (2001-2012)

Source: Department of Tourism, Govt. of Bihar and Tourism Statistics – 2010, Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India

The above diagram shows the number of foreign tourist visits in the state during 2001-2012. The foreign tourist visit in Bihar since 2004 onward reflect progressive trend till 2012. The foreign tourist visit was only about 85 thousand in 2001 and reached to 10.9 lakh in 2012. Bihar shares 5.3% of total foreign tourists visit in India in 2012 and ranks 7th ahead of Kerala (rank 8th) in terms of foreign tourist visit (MOT, India Tourism Statistics at a Glance, 2012). The table 3.1 exhibits that the growth rate of foreign tourist visits in the state. The foreign tourist visit witnessed unprecedented growth rate over the period.

Figure 3.5 - Domestic Tourist Visit in Bihar

Domestic Tourist Visit in Bihar (2001-2012)

Source: Department of Tourism, Govt. of Bihar
Chapter 3: Pilgrimage Tourism in Bihar: An Overview

The above diagram shows the flow of domestic tourist in Bihar during 2001 and 2012. The flow of domestic tourist indicates the fluctuating trends up to 2007. Since 2007 onward the flow of domestic tourists has shown increasing trend till 2010. The domestic tourist visit declined in 2011 and again increased in 2012. Overall domestic tourists visit has witnessed remarkable growth. The domestic tourist visit in the state was about 21 million in 2012. The table 3.1 indicates the growth rate of foreign tourist visits in the state.

The multi-religious Pilgrimage sites are the unique selling proposition of tourism industry in Bihar. This chapter deals with pilgrimage Places of Bihar associated with five sects of believers viz; Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism, Sikhism and Sufism. In order to make tourists acquainted with the pilgrimage places their historical and architectural aspects have been briefly discussed and their geographical location has been described.

3.2 Buddhist Pilgrimage Places in Bihar

As mentioned in the first chapter, out of eight great places of Buddhist pilgrimage three are located in Bihar. These are Bodh-Gaya, Rajgir(Nalanda) and Vaishali. Besides these eight great places of Buddhist pilgrimage, there are many other places held sacred by the followers of the religion. These places rose into prominence during the course of the development of the Buddhism. These places are sites of shrines, Stupas, monasteries etc. Stupa is the most sacred of Buddhist monuments. Buddha himself enjoined his disciple, Ananda, to erect a stupa on the remains of his body after burning on funeral pyre. The Buddhist tradition asserts that the remains of Buddha were divided into eight equal portions and eight stupas were erected over them. Ashoka is believed to have erected 84000 stupas (Publication Division ,1951; Davidson & Gitlitz, 2002). The Other Buddhist pilgrimage spots in Bihar are ruins of Nalanda University, Vikramshila, Kurkihar, Kesaria & Lauria Areraj( East Champaran), Lauriya Nandangarh(West Champaran), and others. Here these places are briefly discussed.

3.2.1 Bodh-Gaya: Bodh-Gaya is the most important Buddhist pilgrimage centre in the world (Schellinger and Salkin, 1997). It is situated in the Gaya district of Bihar. Located along the Falgu, also known as the Niranjana River, just 11 km south of the district headquarter of Gaya. The term Bodh-Gaya (Buddha Gaya) was adopted to distinguish this site of the Buddha’s enlightenment from the city of Gaya (Asher,
008). It is believed that Prince Siddhartha Gautama came to Bodh-Gaya in 6th century B.C and engaged himself in meditation. This meditation under the peepal tree resulted in attainment of enlightenment. The Peepal tree (Ficus religiosa) is now called the Bodhi tree. Bodhi is a Sanskrit word meaning enlightenment. This landmark event in the life of prince Siddhartha made him known as the Buddha. The term Buddha means enlightened one. Thus a new religion was established in the very end of Bodh-Gaya. This new religion is Buddhism. It is one of the four most sacred sites where Buddha advised his followers to visit once in a life time. It is considered as a privileged site to focus the meditations that lead to enlightenment. Buddha remained at Bodh Gaya for seven successive weeks after attainment of enlightenment (Khanna, 2003) and each week is marked by specific activities (Davidson & Gitlitz, 002).

Pilgrimage Spots at Bodh-Gaya

Mahabodi Temple Complex: It is a sunken courtyard dotted with the numerous shrines of varying size including Mahabodhi Temple, Diamond Throne also called Ajrasana, the holy Bodhee tree and numerous votive Stupas (BTMC, 2009-10). Mahabodhi temple complex was declared a world heritage site by UNESCO in 2002. This entitlement made Bodh-Gaya a place of outstanding universal value. And this recognition transformed Bodh-Gaya into a global tourist destination.

Mahabodhi Temple: This temple enshrining an image of Buddha in the earthouching attitude mark the site of holy tree under which Siddhartha Gautam saw the light and became ‘Buddha’ or the ‘Enlightened One’ (Deva, 2008). This temple was first built by Emperor Ashoka in 270 B.C. (Davidson & Gitlitz, 2002), but later rebuilt by another ruler in the 5th century. It is an architectural marvel built of brick (Tewari and Kumar, 2013, July 7). The present Mahabodhi Temple had evolved from the tree shrine also known as Bodhigara and underwent several modifications in different periods. At present, the temple rises approximately to 48.7 meters from ground level to the top of temple. Its base is 14.6 x 14.3 meters, and the height of the base is 9.1 meters. There is a large elevated terrace with shrines at each of the four corners enshrining a large Buddha image. The towering structure of the temple is pyramidal. The doorway is flanked by standing Buddha figure. The figure on the right side has raised hand in the gesture of reassurance, Abhaya mudra, and the figure on the left side has the hand extended downward in varada mudra (Asher, 2008). The Mahabodhi
Chapter 3: Pilgrimage Tourism in Bihar: An Overview

Temple precinct is enclosed by a stone railing, which demarcates the path for circumambulation.

**Bodhee Tree:** This Peepal tree (ficus religiosa), known as Bodhi tree, is on the west side of the Mahabodhi Temple. This Bodhi tree is believed to be the fifth generation of the original tree under which the lord Buddha attained enlightenment. For the first week, he meditated under the Bodhi tree (Asher, 2008). The platform under the Bodhi tree is described as the diamond throne or vajrasana. It represents the site of Buddha enlightenment.

**Animeshalochana Chaitya(Tara Devi Temple):** This spot is identified with the second week of activities after enlightenment (Davidson & Gitlitz, 2002). This is the place where Buddha sat for seven days without blinking (Animeshalochan), gazing constantly at the Bodhi tree. This is located north to the temple. Today, at this site there is a temple. This temple is known as Tara Devi temple.

**Jewel Walks (Ratnachankrama):** It is a raised platform. Its height is about one meter and its length is about 16 meter. It is believed that during third week after enlightenment, Buddha went up and down to the north of the tree. He walked there east and west for a distance of ten places or so. Under his footstep miraculous flowers sprang up. At present, the Buddha footstep is represented by raised circles. There is a row of eleven pillar bases parallel to raised jewel walk on the north side of the Mahabodhi temple (Asher, 2008). Pilgrims offers flowers on the sculptured footstep and on the pillar bases to commemorate that miraculous event. The fourth week is identified with rainbow shrines and during fifth week the Buddha broke his fast with milk and rice (Davidson & Gitlitz, 2002).

**Muchilinda Lake:** This is a holy tank where snake king gave protection to Lord Buddha during a terrible storm during the sixth week of meditation. According to legend, Muchalinda, the snake king, protected Lord Buddha against the thunder and rain. The snake king was believed to be sent by the demons to disturb Lord Buddha in meditation (Davidson & Gitlitz, 2002).

**Rajayatna Tree:** Buddha spent his seventh and final week in Bodh-Gaya under this tree (Davidson & Gitlitz, 2002). He is said to have sat in contemplation till he responded to the offering of rice cake and honey from two travelling merchants. These two merchants were Tapussa and Bhallika. It is believed that vessel to receive offering were extended to Buddha by gods. Today this site is identified by the sign as
Chapter 3: Pilgrimage Tourism in Bihar: An Overview

the location of the Rajyatna tree. This site is located in southeast of the Mahabodhi temple.

Sujata Stupa/Garh: The pilgrimage spot is located one Km away from Mahabodhi Temple on the east bank of the Niranjan River in Bakraur. It is a large brick Stupa, excavated by Archeological Survey of India in 1970s, and identified with the residence of Sujata. The excavations revealed an inscription of 8th-9th century A.D. reading as ‘Devpala Rajasya Sujath Griha’. Sujata was a woman who offered the Buddha with rice milk for breaking his long fast just prior to his meditation leading to enlightenment. It was constructed in three phases from Gupta to Pala period. The entire structure was originally plastered with lime. Some of the antiquities unearthed during excavations are displayed in Archeological Survey of India museum (Bodhgaya)(Written on Slab in Sujata Garh Premise, Bodh-Gaya).

Dungeshwari: This pilgrimage site is located about six kilometer north-east of Bodhgaya. This site is identified with the place where Buddha spent six years in meditation prior to his enlightenment. This site is also known as Pragbodhi.

Besides the above mentioned pilgrimage spots, other attractions at Bodhgaya are monasteries representing different countries with substantial Buddhist populations such as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar, China, Thailand, Japan etc. the great Buddha statue, archeological museum, and Maya Sarovar. Over 50 monasteries of different Buddhist countries and sects have been built in the vicinity of the temple complex (Tewari and Kumar, 2013, July 7). With the passage of time, Bodh-Gaya has turned into global pilgrimage destination.

Tourist Traffic at Bodh-Gaya

Pilgrims and tourists from different parts of the country and the world visit Bodhgaya with multiple purposes. The following figure shows the tourist arrival to Bodhgaya since 2001.
Chapter 3: Pilgrimage Tourism in Bihar: An Overview

Figure 3.6: Domestic Tourist Arrival to Bodh-Gaya (2001-2012)

DOMESTIC TOURIST ARRIVAL TO BODHGAYA

Source: Directorate of Tourism, Patna (Bihar), 2012.

The above diagram shows the flow of domestic tourist to Bodh-gaya during 2001 and 2012. The flow of domestic tourist indicates the increasing trends. The domestic tourists arrival was highest in 2011. From 175980 in 2001, the domestic tourist arrival went up to 1006132 in 2011 but marginally declined in 2012.

Figure 3.7: Foreign Tourist Arrival to Bodh-Gaya (2001-2012)

Foreign Tourist Arrival

Source: Directorate of Tourism, Patna (Bihar), 2012.

The foreign tourists inflows to Bodh-Gaya depicts a fluctuating trends as reflected by the above diagram over the period 2001 to 2012. In absolute terms, however, the arrival of foreign tourists multiplied nine fold from 30161 in 2001 to 293519 in 2011. In the subsequent year 2012, however, the number of foreign footfalls declined to 207933. The growing pilgrimage tourism has brought economic benefits and crowded the ancient town of Bodh-Gaya in the past decade. The social
and economic life of Gaya, the nearest town, around 15 kilometers, from the Mahabodhi temple, revolves around serving and catering to the pilgrims visiting the Buddhist sites (Tewari and Kumar, 2013, July 7).

Accessibility: The pilgrimage site is located 17 Km away from Gaya railway station and 135 km from Patna airport. Other Buddhist places like Nalanda and Rajgir are 101 km and 78 km away respectively from Bodh-gaya. The nearest railway station from Bodhgaya is Gaya. Gaya is well connected to different cities in India by rail. Bodhgaya is well connected to Patna and Other Buddhist Pilgrimage centers by road. There is an international airport at Gaya about 10 km from Bodhgaya and other international airport in Patna about 135km from Bodhgaya. The airport is connected with Colombo, Bangkok and Thimpu.

Accommodation: There are many private hotels, BSTDC hotels and monasteries at Bodhgaya providing accommodation facilities to visitors.

Amenities: There are many restaurants, shopping outlets, ATM facilities, etc. Bihar Tourism Department runs Tourist Information Centre at Bodhgaya to facilitate the travel of visitors. Prospective visitors may arrange their trip through BSTDC website.

3.2.2 Nalanda: It is one of the districts of Bihar and it is also identified with the particular place where nowadays ruins of Nalanda University stand. Its headquarter is located at Biharsharif. It is known all over the world for its ancient Nalnada University. Nalanda district is divided into three sub-division viz; Biharsharif, Hilsa and Rajgir. Biharsharif, the district headquarter, is an important Sufi pilgrimage center. Rajgir, the smallest sub-division, is most important from tourism standpoint. Rajgir, Nalanda remains and Pawapuri are in Rajgir sub-division.1 Thus, the proximity of these three places forms a tourism zone, of which Rajgir is the axis. Rajgir is distinguished to have multi-religious pilgrimage sites coupled with historical sites and natural scenery. The prime Buddhist pilgrimage places of Nalnada are Rajgir and the Ruins of the Nalanda University.

Rajgir: Rajgir is one of the most important early historic sites of India. It was the earlier capital of Magadha Kingdom (later on shifted to Patliputra, modern Patna). The Kingdom of Magadha expanded in to the first pan-Indian state. It was intimately associated with the life of Buddha, but had significant non-Buddhist and pre-Buddhist association as well (Chakrabarti, 1976). In ancient times, it was the capital of

1 Retrieved from http://nalanda.bih.nic.in/dist_admin.asp
Magadh Kingdom and was known by many names such as Vasumati, Grivraja, Kushagrapura, Brahadrathapura and Rajgriha(Singh, 2007). At present, it is one of the sub-division of Nalanda district. Rajgir is enclosed by five hills. Buddha spent many years at Rajgir and lived in different locality. It is associated with the third miracle of Buddha’s life. Buddha controlled the infuriated elephant called as Nalagiri. The elephant was let loose by Buddha’s jealous cousin Devadatta, to encompass his death. Following are the major historical and pilgrimage spots of Rajgir visited by Lakhs of tourists and pilgrims every year.

**Buddhist Pilgrimage spots of Rajgir**

**The Vishva Shanti Stupa**: It is located on a 400 meter high hill. It is built of marble. It is 160-ft-tall Stupa. There are four glimmering statues of Buddha on the four corners of the Stupa. Visitors use to go to the top through the “Ropeways”. This gives the panoramic views of the hills to the visitors. The foundation stone of the Stupa was laid by president S Radha krishnan in 1965 and it was inaugurated by President V.V Giri in 1969.

**Griddhkuta or Vulture’s Peak**: It was the favorite place of Buddha (Narayan, 1983). There is a platform where Buddha used to sit. At this place, the Lord Buddha converted his two principle disciples and preached the wisdom sutra and set in motion his second wheel of dharma (Davidson & Gitlitz, 2002). The Lord Buddha used to preach here in rainy season every year. The circuitous path both from ground and from Vishwa Shanti Stupa leads to the hill. This route gives a very thrilling experience.

**Venuvana**: It was the monastery built by king Bimbisara for Lord Buddha to reside. This was considered the first offering of king’s to Lord Buddha. There is a tank named, Karanda Tank, in the Venuvana where Lord Buddha used to have bath. Now this spot is transformed into park and contains the tank and an image of Buddha.

**Bimbisara Jail**: It is an enclosure with thick stone walls and bastions. It is named as such because Bimbisara, one of the two kings of Magadha, contemporary to the Buddha is known to have been imprisoned by his son Ajatshatru(Chakrabarti, 1976). It is said that from his prison Bimbisara used to see Buddha on the Gridhakuta Hill. This particular hill is still visible from this location. Its area is about 200 ft square and enclosed by a stone wall. The stone wall is about 6 ft thick. There exists a circular bastion at the corners of this jail (Kuraishi, 1950).
Pippala Cave: It is irregular shaped cell at the base of Jarasanda Ki Baithak or watchtower just above the Brahma Kund area on the way leading to the top of the Vaibhara hill. The cave is built of large unhewn blocks of stone on the rock without any mortar. Some Pali texts claim that this cave was the residence of the president of the first Buddhist council i.e. Mahakashyapa and Buddha is believed to visit this cave when Mahakashyapa was sick (Kuraishi, 1950).

Saptaparni Cave: It is a natural cave divided into several irregular compartments. The cave is located on the Vaibhara hill. It is supposed to mark the spot where the first Buddhist council was held after the death of Buddha. The Buddhist council constitutes the integral component of the Buddhist religious history. The council was attended by five hundred monks and was held six months after the death of Buddha (Chakrabarti, 1976; Kuraishi, 1950).

Jivakameavan Garden: It was named after Jivaka who was the Royal Physician during the time of Lord Buddha. It is believed that at this very place Jivaka treated Buddha when Buddha’s foot was injured by the misdeed of Devadatta.

The sacred centre of the Hinayan sect is locally known as Burmese Buddhist temple whereas the sacred centre of the Mahayan sect is locally known as Japanese Buddhist temple (Narayan, 1983).

Tourist Traffic at Rajgir:

The pilgrimage spots at Rajgir are visited both by domestic as well as foreign tourists. The number of tourists footfalls attracted by various spots in Rajgir have been substantial in absolute terms. Figure 3.8 below depicts the number of domestic tourists arrivals from 2001-2012.

**Figure 3.8: Domestic Tourist Arrival to Rajgir (2001-2012)**

![Bar chart showing domestic tourist arrivals to Rajgir from 2001 to 2012](chart.png)

Source: Directorate of Tourism, Patna (Bihar), 2012.
Chapter 3: Pilgrimage Tourism in Bihar: An Overview

The above figure which shows the flow of domestic tourist to Rajgir during 2001 and 2012 reflects that the number of tourists rose more than four-fold in 2012 over 2001 but with a fluctuating trends during the period. From 821911 in 2001, their number swelled to 3700446 in 2012. This is indicative of the ever-increasing significance and popularity of Rajgir as tourist destination. Rajgir is equally important destination to foreign tourists as would appear from the statistics of their arrival to Rajgir during the corresponding period 2001-2012 as depicted in the figure 3.9 below.

Figure 3.9: Foreign Tourist Arrival to Rajgir (2001-2012)

![Foreign Tourist Arrival to Rajgir Chart]

Source: Directorate of Tourism, Patna (Bihar), 2012.

The above figure shows that flow of foreign tourists to Rajgir maintains fluctuating trends from 2001 to 2007. Since 2007 onward the flow of foreign tourists has shown a steady increasing trend. Overall, the rise in foreign tourists arrivals to Rajgir has been tremendous having risen from just 17,631 in 2001 to an enormous 3,73,186 in 2012.

Accessibility: Rajgir is 101 kms from Patna airport. Rajgir is well connected by road to Patna - 110 kms, Nalanda - 12 kms, Gaya - 78 kms, Pawapuri - 38 kms, Bihar Sharif - 25 kms etc. Rajgir is connected to Delhi by Railway.

Accommodation: There are many private hotels, BSTDC hotels and Guest Houses at Rajgir providing accommodation facilities to visitors.

Amenities: Restaurants, ATM facilities, etc. are available at Rajgir. Bihar Tourism Department runs Tourist Information Centre at Rajgir to facilitate the travel of visitors. Prospective visitors may arrange their trip through BSTDC website.

Nalanda (Ruins of Nalanda University): At present, the ancient Nalanda is identified with the village of Baragaon and locally known by the name of Nalanda itself. The
exposed structure of the university represents only a part of extensive establishment. The complex of the university consists of monastic sites, Stupa sites and temple sites. The monasteries are located on the eastern side and Stupa and the temples’ on the western side of the ruins of the university (Publication Division, 1951). The Buddhist pilgrim offers prayers at Stupa. Nalanda University was a Buddhist centre of learning from 5th/6th century to 12th century. It was one of the first great Universities in recorded history and attracted scholars and students from as far away as China, Greece and Persia (The Hindu, 2011 September 13). Nalanda rose to prominence in medieval period on account of this university or monastery. Nalanda was nothing short of a temple of God to the Buddhist (Sankalia, 1972) and still it is revered as temple because the researcher has found the Buddhist pilgrims praying in front of Stupa. Nowadays the grandeur of the university is represented by its ruins. Nalanda is the only non-Chinese institution in which any Chinese scholar was educated in the history of ancient China (The Hindu, 2011, January 8). The project of revival of Nalanda University is in pipeline and very soon it will be materialized. The revival of this University will open a new chapter for the cultural diplomacy of India. There is an institute close to this place, Nav Nalanda Mahavihara, completely dedicated to study and research in Pali literature and Buddhism.

**Tourist Traffic at Ruins of Nalanda University**

Pilgrims and tourists from different parts of the country and the world visit this particular site. The following figure shows the tourist arrival during the period of 2006 to 2012.

**Figure 3.10: Domestic Tourist Arrival to Ruins of Nalanda University**

(2006-2012)

![Domestic Tourist Arrival(2006-2012)](source)

*Source: India Tourism Statistics (MOT 2008, 2010) and Directorate of Tourism, Patna (Bihar), 2012*

The above figure shows that flow of domestic tourists to ruins of Nalanda University during the period of 2006 to 2012. The above figure shows that the number
of tourists rose more than five-fold in 2012 over 2006 but with a fluctuating trend during the period. From 174133 in 2006, their number swelled to 934125 in 2012. This is indicative of the ever-increasing significance and popularity of the site.

**Figure 3.11: Foreign Tourist Arrival to Ruins of Nalanda University (2006-2012)**

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*Source: India Tourism Statistics (MOT 2008, 2010) and Directorate of Tourism, Patna (Bihar), 2012.*

The above figure shows that flow of foreign tourists to ruins of Nalanda University during the period of 2006 to 2012. In the year 2006 more than thirty five thousand visited the site. The arrival of foreign tourists to this site witnessed fluctuating trend till 2009. The foreign tourist arrival has increased from 2009 onward.

**Accessibility:** The place is located 89 km away from Patna airport, 12 km from Rajgir railway station and 95 km from Gaya railway station and 110 km from Bodhgaya. It is well connected to Biharsharif, Rajgir, Bodh-Gaya and Patna by road. It is 13 km away from district headquarter i.e., Biharsharif. Horse-driven Targas and Cycle rickshaw are available for local transportation.

**Accommodation:** The accommodation facilities are available at Rajgir and Biharsharif.

**Amenities:** There are number of catering and food outlets and souvenir shops. There is Tourist Information Center just in front of the entrance of the university. Tourists may get the information about the places of tourist interest around the spot and other tourist spots in Bihar.

**3.2.3 Vaishali:** Vaishali is one of the districts of Bihar situated on the north of river Ganga. The District is surrounded by river Ganga in south and Gandak in west. The state capital Patna is linked with famous Mahatma Gandhi Setu. It is the place associated with the Buddha and lord Mahavira and mentioned in the Ramayana and Buddhist literature. Vaishali was one of the earliest republics in the world (6th century
BC). Vaishali is credited with being the World's First Republic to have a duly elected assembly of representatives and efficient administration. The ancient city of Vaishali is now represented by the ruins of Raja Bisal Ka Garh at Basarh and the adjoining regions in modern Muzaffarpur district of Bihar (Publication Division, 1951). The Chinese travelers Fa-Hien and Hieun Tsang also visited this place in early 5th and 7th centuries respectively and wrote properly about Vaishali. Earlier the district of Vaishali was the part of old Muzzafarpur district. Lord Buddha is believed to have visited Vaishali thrice. The third miracle related to Buddha happened at Vaishali. The miracle is related to offering of honey to Buddha by monkeys. Buddha announced his approaching Nirvana at Vaishali. Lord Buddha preached and delivered his last sermon here. The second Buddhist Council was organized here to discuss and remove the mutual differences of monks during the reign of Kalashoka (Publication Division, 1951; Majumdar, 1974). The main attraction of Vaishali is Shanti Stupa, Licchavi’s Stupa, Kharaurna Pokhar and Archeological Museum.

Tourist Traffic at Vaishali

Domestic and foreign tourists visited Vaishali and went around Buddhist shrines for which the place is significantly famous. Figures below present the number of visitors, domestic and foreign, who visited Vaishali over the period 2001 to 2012.

Figure 3.12: Domestic Tourist Arrival to Vaishali (2001-2012)

![Domestic Tourist Arrival to Vaishali](chart)

Source: Directorate of Tourism, Patna (Bihar), 2012.

The above figure shows the domestic tourist arrival to Vaishali during the period of 2001-2012. The flow of domestic tourist indicates the highly fluctuating trends.
Figure 3.13: Foreign Tourist Arrival to Vaishali (2001-2012)

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*Source: Directorate of Tourism, Patna (Bihar), 2012.*

The above figure shows the flow of foreign tourists to Vaishali during 2001 and 2012. The foreign tourists’ arrival was 17000 in 2001, which has gone up to 37533 in 2012. As it is observed from the above figure that Vaishali has witnessed an increasing trend of foreign tourist arrival since 2009 onwards.

**Accessibility:** It is located 70 Kms away from Patna airport and 56 km from Patna railway station. The nearest railway stations Hajipur and Muzaffarpur are 35 km and 40 km away from here. The place is also well connected by road to Patna, Muzaffarpur and Hazipur.

**Accommodation:** The accommodation is provided by BSTDC hotels and Youth hostels.

**Amenities:** Restaurants and other catering outlets are available. Tourist Information Center is there to facilitate the movement of visitors around the pilgrimage spots in Vaishali.

### 3.2.4 Other Buddhist Pilgrimage sites in Bihar

Besides the above mentioned Buddhist pilgrimage spots there are several other places associated with the religious development of Buddhism. These places are spread over different parts of Bihar and briefly discussed below.

**Kolhua:** It is in Muzaffarpur district of Bihar and about 10 km from Vaishali. Its attraction is Ashokan pillar, locally known as Bhimsen’s Lath. The pillar is made up of highly polished sandstone. Its height is about 22 feet and surmounted by a bell shaped capital which support the figure of lion on a square abacus (Publication Division, 1951). The visitors may stay either at Vaishali or Muzaffarpur and they may make day trip from Patna. It is visited by Buddhist pilgrims as well as other visitors.

**Kesaria and Areraj:** These two Buddhist pilgrimage spots lie in the East Champaran district of Bihar. Kesaria is located 75 km away from Muzaffarpur and 110 km from
Patna. Archeological survey of India discovered the Stupa in the year 1998. It is the tallest and largest Buddhist Stupa in the world. The Stupa dates back to the sixth century. Lord Buddha is believed to have spent one night during the course of his journey from Vaishali to Kushinagar (Uttar Pradesh). The Stupa is locally known as "Raja Ben Ka Deora'. The circumference and the height of the stupa are 1400 feet and 104 feet (32 meter) respectively. The Stupa has six floor or terraces similar to that of Borobodur in Indonesia. There stands an Ashokan pillar at Areraj.

**Lauriya Nandangarh:** This Buddhist pilgrimage spot is located in West Champaran district of Bihar. There are two objects of interest at this place. One is Ashokan Pillar and the other is Stupa, which is 1.5 Km from Ashokan Pillar. The stupa is 24 meters high and its circumference is about 457 meters. Lauriya Nandangarh is 190 Km from Patna and 26 Km from Bettiah (District Head Quarter of West Champaran).

**Vikramshila:** This Buddhist pilgrimage spot is located in Bhagalpur district of Bihar. It is 50 kms east of Bhagalpur and about 13 kms north-east of Kahalgaon railway station. At present the famous Vikramshila University is represented by the ruins of excavated remains. The Buddhist University was founded by Pala king Dharmapala in late 8th or early 9th Century A.D. The University was thriving centre of education in different disciplines for about four centuries before it collapsed in the beginning of 13th century AD. The university had more than hundred teachers and about one thousand students. Atisa Dipankara, the founder of Lamaism in Tibet, was one of the most distinguished and eminent scholars of this university. A large number of subjects were taught like theology, philosophy, grammar, metaphysics, logic etc. The ruins of excavated remains spreading over the area of more than hundred acres now represents a huge square monastery with a cruciform Stupa in its centre, a library building and cluster of votive Stupas in addition to a number of scattered structures including a Tibetan and a Hindu temple in the north of monastery. The architecture of the Stupa of Vikramshila resembles the contemporary Somapura Mahavihara, Paharpur in Bangladesh. There is an archeological museum here displaying a large number of antiquities unearthed from this place during the course of excavation. The museum is maintained by Archaeological Survey of India. Accommodation facilities are not available at this place. Visitors may stay in Bhagalpur and from here they may go on day trip.

**Buddha Smirti Park:** This park is situated in front of Patna Railway station in Patna. This park is recently constructed by Bihar Government and inaugurated by Dalai
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Lama on 27th May 2010 to commemorate the 2550th Mahaparinirvana anniversary of Lord Buddha. The Bodhi Tree was planted in this park by Dalai Lama. The stupa installed in this park was named “Patliputra Karuna Stupa”. This park is spread over 21 acre of land. The image of Lord Buddha made of black stone was also installed by Dalai Lama in January 2013 (Dainik Jagran, 4th January 2013 and Hindustan, 5th January, 2013, Patna).

Barabar Caves: There are three cave temples or dwellings of the Mauryan periods in Barabar Hill. The caves are located in Jahanabad district. Barabar caves bear dated inscriptions of Ashoka dedicated to the Ajivikas. They were excavated in hardest granite and the interior walls have mirror like polish on them. The three caves in Barabar hills are Sudama cave, the Karna Chaupar cave and the Lornash Rishi cave. These caves were copies of wooden structural temples or Caityas which were constructed in that time (Bhattacharya, 1974).

3.3 Jain Pilgrimage Places in Bihar

Bihar is equally important for the followers of Jainism. Bihar has been the birth place of three Jain Tirthankars and their religious activities. The places associated with their birth, religious activities and nirvana offered sanctity to many places in Bihar and in due course of time these places developed into Jain pilgrimage centers. The followers of Jainism, nearly 4 million worldwide, make pilgrimage to sites connected with Jainism’s founder and to places associated with the other Tirthankars (Davidson & Gitlitz, 2002). Following are the Jain pilgrimage centers in Bihar:

3.3.1 Vasokund(Muzaffarpur), Kundalpur(Nalanda) and Lachhuvar(Jamui):
These three places are considered the birth place of lord Mahavir, the 24th Jain Tirthankara by the different sects of Jainism. There is no consensus regarding the birth place of lord Mahavir among the religious leaders of Jain and Jain scholars. According to Digambar sect of Jainism, Mahavir was born at Kundalpur in Nalanda district, whereas the followers of Swetamber sect of Jainism believe that Mahavira was born at Lachhuvar in Jamui district of Bihar. According to historians and one section of Digambar jain, the birth place of Mahavir is Vaishali, now at Vasokund/Kundagram in Muzaffarpur District of Bihar. Most interesting thing is that all these three places have Jain temples and visited by Jain pilgrims from different parts of the country.
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Vasokund/Kundagram: It is located in Muzaffarpur district. At Vasokund, Muzaffarpur the Jain temple is under construction and there is also Jain Research Institute. Digambar Jains, a section of Jainism believe that Vasokund is the birth place of Lord Mahavir which is also corroborated by historians. It is about 60 km from Patna. Vaishali Mahotsava is celebrated every year on the full moon day of Vaishakha (a month of Hindi calendar) to commemorate the birth anniversary of Lord Mahavira.

Kundalpur: It is located near the ruins of Nalanda University in Nalanda district of Bihar. This pilgrimage spot is 16 Km from Rajgir, and 25Km from Pawapuri. According to Digambar Jain belief this is the birth place of Lord Mahavir. There are Jain temples. About 500 Jain pilgrims visit daily during the period of October to March. The Digambar Jain Samiti provides accommodation facilities to Jain pilgrims for 2-3 days free of cost. Donations are offered by the visiting pilgrims voluntarily (A. Jain, Personal Communication, December 18, 2012).

Lachuar: This pilgrimage spot is in Jamui district of Bihar. According to Swetamber belief of Jainism this place is the birth place of Lord Mahavir (Chaudhary, 1991).

3.3.2 Rajgir: Rajgir is also an important Jain pilgrimage centre. It is the birth place of 20th Jain Tirthankar, Muni Suvrata (Khanna, 2003). The Lord Mahavir passed fourteen rainy seasons in Rajgir and its suburbs (Singh, 2007). Eleven out of the twelve gandharas or leading disciples of Mahavira attained nirvana in Rajgir (Ramachandran, 1944). There are five hills in Rajgir and these all are sacred for Jains. Jain temples are located on all the five hills. The names of hills are Vipulachal, Ratna Giri, Udaygiri Swarna Giri and Vaibhargiri. These hills are also known as first parvat, second parvat, third parvat, fourth parvat and fifth parvat respectively. The first pahari(Vipulachal) and the fifth pahari(Vaibhargiri) are opposite to each other. The Jain pilgrims visit all these Paharis to perform Darshan. Apart from these five sacred hills, there are many Jain temples and a Jain Museum in Rajgir. The Jain museum is located in Veerayatan. Veerayatan is a Jain Ashram which attracts both Jain pilgrims and other visitors. The museum displays the vivid glimpses of the lives of all Jain Tirthankars.

Accessibility: This has already been discussed in the section dealing with Buddhist pilgrimage places in Bihar

Accommodation: There are many hotels at Rajgir providing comfortable stay to the visitors. Besides, for Jain pilgrims there are many Jain dhamashalas at Rajgir. The
accommodation facility is also available for Jain pilgrims at Veerayatan. The Jain dharamashalas provide local transportation and also arrange for the ‘doli’ for visiting paharis for children and old persons.

**Amenities:** Restaurants, ATM facilities, etc. are available at Rajgir. Bihar Tourism Department runs tourist information centre at Rajgir to facilitate the travel of visitors.

3.3.3 **Pawapuri:** It is in Nalanda district of Bihar and also known as Apapapuri. Lord Mahavira stayed for several months and attained Nirvana at Pawapuri. There are seven important Jain temples at Pawapuri. All these seven temples are situated within the range of two kilometers. Every year about two lakh Jain pilgrims and thousands of tourists visit this pilgrimage centre. There are three foot prints of Lord Mahavira which have been installed by his elder brother, king Nandiwardhan. The first footprint is in Gaon Mandir, the second in Jalmandir and third in Samosharan Mandir(U. Upadhayay and N. Upadhayay, Personal Communication, December 10, 2012).

**Jain Temples at Pawapuri**

The Jain temples at Pawapuri are: Gaon Mandir, Jalmandir, Samosaran Temple, Dadawari Temple, Naya Mandir(Maatab Bibi Ka Mandir), Prachin Samosharan Mandir and Digamber Jain temple. All these Jain temples except Digamber Jain temple are Shwetamber Jain temples. Lord Mahavira attained Nirvana at Gaon Mandir after delivering forty eight hour long sermon in 527 B.C. The statue of Lord Mahavira installed in this temple is 2 thousand year old.

**Jalmandir:** This stand at the place where Lord Mahavira, the founder of Jainism, was cremated. This place got turned into lake due to extensive removal of soil by the devotees to mark their foreheads. This beautiful temple got constructed by the elder brother of Lord’s Nirvana, king Nandiwardhan. It is made of white marble and situated in the centre of the tank. There are foot prints of Lord Mahavira in the middle of his two disciples’ foot prints. The footprint on the right side is of first disciple, Gautam Swami whereas on the left side is that of fifth disciple, Sudharma Swami. Every year on the eve of Deepawali, three days fair are held to commemorate the Nirvana of Lord Mahavira(U. Upadhayay, Personal Communication, December 10, 2012).

**Samosaran Temple:** This temple is 1.5 km from Jalmandir in east direction. Here lord Mahavira delivered four month long sermon.

**Accessibility:** It is 38 km from Rajgir and 90 km
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Accommodation: There is a dharamshala with the capacity for accommodating 1500-2000 Jain pilgrims. The accommodation services are provided free of cost to the Jain pilgrims. The non-Jain visitors may stay either at Rajgir or Bihar Sharif where a number of Hotels are available for night stay.

Amenities: The local catering outlets and other shops are available for catering to routine need of the visitors.

3.3.4 Champanagar: This Jain pilgrimage spot is about 4 km from Bhagalpur town and 270 km from Patna. This is the birthplace of 12th Jain Tirthankar Vasupujya. Lord Mahavir, the 24th Jain Tirthankar spent three rainy seasons at this place (Roy, 1988). There is a Jain temple in which lord Vasupujya image is installed.

3.3.5 Kamaldah: This Jain pilgrimage spot is located near the Gulzarbagh railway station (Patna) and 6 km from Patna Railway station. There are two Jain temples built in the 18th century. One temple is of Shri Shreshthi Sudarsan Mandir and the other one is of Shri Sthulbhadar Ji Mandir. This place is visited by 500-600 Jain pilgrims annually from different parts of the country. Kartik Mahotsav is celebrated annually (A. Parsad, Personal Communication, December 13, 2012).

3.3.6 Mandar Hill: It is in Banka district of Bihar. This is Jain as well as Hindu pilgrimage spot. Mandar hill is about 700 feet high and 50 km away from Bhagalpur town. At this place the 12th Jain Tirthankar is believed to have attained Nirvana (Majumdar, 1974). There is a tank at the foot of the hill and has reputation for curing ailments and attract a large number of people for bath on Makar sakranti day.

3.4 Sikh Pilgrimage Places in Bihar

Temple of Sikh is called ‘Gurudwara’, which literally means gateway to the Guru. The holy book of the Sikh is installed in the centre of Gurudwara (Gill, 1975). The prominent Sikh pilgrimage center in Bihar is Patna Sahib, close to which there are many Sikh pilgrimage shrines.

Patna Sahib: It is located in an old quarter of Patna, the capital of Bihar and is one of the important pilgrimage centers for Sikhs. It is the birthplace of the 10th Sikh guru, Guru Gobind Singh. He spent his childhood in the lap of its serene environs. He was born in the month of December 1666 and at that time his father Sri Guru Teg Bahadur was in Assam on religious mission. When he was six years old, his family shifted to Anandpur sahib (Sahib, 2011) The founder of Sikh religion, Guru Nanak and the 9th guru, Teg Bahadur also visited here. Birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh is
celebrated with great enthusiasm. Sikh devotees from across India and world participate in this gala event. The date of birth anniversary fluctuates every year. No date falls in the year 2012 and it was celebrated on 16th, 17th and 18th of January 2013. On the occasion of birth anniversary Patna sahib turns into mini-Punjab (D. Singh, Personal Communication, December 12, 2012). Following are the Sikh pilgrimage shrines at and around Patna Sahib:

Takht Harimandir Sahib: Takht Harimandir Sahib stands on the place where the tenth guru of the Sikhs Guru Gobind Singh was born. Its construction dates back to 18th century but the shrine has undergone several modifications since then (Davidson & Gitlitz, 2002). It comprises one of the five Takhts or Seat of Authority of the Sikhs. The Takht Harimandir is the second most important Takht of Sikhs (Dainik Jagran, 9th November 2012, Patna). The relics of the Guru Gobind Singh are preserved in this shrine. The relics include a 'pangura' (cradle) with four stands covered with golden plates, four iron arrows, sacred sword of the Master and a pair of his sandals. 'Hukamnamas', are kept in the Gurudwara. It is the written orders of Guru Gobind Singh and Guru Tegh Bahadur.

Gurudwara Gobind Ghat: This pilgrimage spot is also known as Kangan Ghat. This has been the playfield of Guru Gobind Singh. This pilgrimage spot is opposite to Takht Harimandir Sahib.

Gurudwara Guru Ka Bag: This is the place where Guru Tegh Bahadur met for the first time with his son Guru Gobind Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur Singh was on the religious mission when Guru Gobind Singh was born. This pilgrimage spot is about 4 km from Takht Harimandir Sahib.

Gurudwara Bal Leela: It is also known as Maini Sangat. This is on walking distance of 5 minutes from Takht Harimandir Sahib. This pilgrimage spot commemorates the spot where Guru Gobind Singh in his childhood used to play in the evening.

Gurudwara Handi Sahib: This Gurudwara is in Danapur which is 30 km from Takht Harimandir Sahib.

Gurudwara Sonar Toli: This is situated one km from Takht Harimandir Sahib.

Gurudwara Gaighat: It is also known as Gurudwara Bari Sangat. This pilgrimage shrine is located 4 km away from Gurudwara Har Mandir Sahib. This spot was visited by first Sikh Guru, Guru Nanak, and 9th Guru, Guru Teg Bahadur. Guru Teg Bahadur stayed here with his family while he was on the way of his visit to the east. Then he, along with his family, went to the Sangat of Salas Roy Johri (Now this Place is Takht
Patna Sahib). The things in the Gurudwara Gaihat associated with the visit of Guru Teg Bahadur are following: Thara Sahib, Tree of Harsringar, Chakki of Guru Pariwar and Khirki Sahib.

**Tourist Traffic at Patna Sahib:** Sikh population in India is not very substantial compared to other major religions. Therefore, the number of visitors to Sikh shrines is smaller in absolute terms as would appear from the following diagrams:

**Figure 3.14: Domestic Tourist Arrivals to Patna Sahib**

![Bar chart showing domestic tourist arrivals to Patna Sahib from 2010 to 2012](chart)

*Source: Tourist Information Centre, Patna Sahib, 2012*

The above figure shows the flow of domestic tourist to Patna Sahib during 2010 and 2012. The flow of domestic tourists indicates the decreasing trends.

Sikhs are spread in various countries world over. They come to visit their religious shrines from different countries as foreign tourists. The following figure shows the foreign tourists arrival to Patna Sahib.

**Figure 3.15: Foreign Tourist Arrivals to Patna Sahib**

![Bar chart showing foreign tourist arrivals to Patna Sahib from 2010 to 2012](chart)

*Source: Tourist Information Centre, Patna Sahib, 2012.*

The above figure shows the flow of foreign tourist in numbers to Patna Sahib during 2010, 2011 and 2012. The arrival of foreign tourists to Patna Sahib although is very low but it has an increasing trend.

**Accessibility:** Patna Sahib is well connected to different parts of the country by train, by air and by road. Patna Sahib is 15 kilometer from Patna Air port and 12 kilometer
from Patna railway station. It is easily accessible from railway station, bus stand and airport by means of auto-rickshaw and private taxi.

**Accommodation:** There is a Dharamshala in the compound of Takht Harmandir where Sikh pilgrims are provided accommodation. There are also large numbers of good quality hotels are available for comfortable stay of the visitors in Patna.

**Amenities:** There are many shops and eating outlets at Patna Sahib. There is a railway ticket counter and tourist information centre in the same compound. Clock room facilities is available for visitors. Local transportation to the different Gurudwaras in Patna is provided by Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee by charging an amount of Rs. 50 per person.

### 3.5 Hindu Pilgrimage Places in Bihar

The Hindu religious books Viz'; Brahmanas, Mahabharata, Puranas etc. highlight the virtues of pilgrimage. Bihar has many places associated with the cult of Rama and Sita. There are hundreds of pilgrimage spots spread across the Bihar. Some of them are held very sacred and attract religious and non-religious tourists from different parts of country and from neighboring country like Nepal, whereas majority of the pilgrimage spots attract the visitors from their locality only. Amongst the Hindu pilgrimage spots in Bihar, Gaya and Rajgir are very famous in India.

#### 3.5.1 Gaya: It is one of the districts of Bihar and situated on the bank of river Falgu. Its historic significance derives entirely from its role as one of the most important Hindu shrines in India (Schellinger and Salkin, 1997). It is most important Hindu pilgrimage centre in Bihar attracting visitors from different parts of the country for offering ‘Pinda’ to the souls of dead ancestors. Hindu pilgrims come to Gaya for performing Shraddha rites. The rites are performed for the souls of recently departed fathers(Asher, 2008). It is believed that the God Vishnu has given the site the power to absolve dying sinners of their misdeeds. The Vishnupad Temple is the most important Hindus shrines in Gaya. It was built in the eighteenth century by the queen of Indore, Mrs. AhilAya Bye(Ambush, 1940; Schellinger and Salkin, 1997). It is dedicated to Lord Vishnu. The temple is located along the Falgu River and marked by a footprint of Lord Vishnu. The footprint is known as Dharmasila, incised into a block of basalt. The footprint consists of nine different symbols including Shankam, Chakram and Gadham, which were his weapons, believed to be on the heels of the lord. The temple is believed to be visited by legendary saints as Ramanujacharya,
Madhavacharya, Sankaradeva and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Rama along with Sita is also believed to have visited this place. Other temples in Gaya are Gadadhar Namdhari Vishnu temple, Gyasuri Devi Temple, Surya Dev temple, Parpitamaheshwar temple and Krishna Dwarka temple (Ambushth, 1940). The hill surrounding the Gaya is also considered sacred by Hindus. There are many temples on the hills. Of these hills Brahyoni hill is the highest. Its height is 450 ft. There is one cave in it and as per legend it is said that whosoever enters the cave will be freed from the cycle of rebirth. The other hills are called Ramsheela hill and Pretshila Hill. Pitrapaksha festival is held every year and lasts for a fortnight. On this occasion pilgrims from different parts of the country and from the other countries like Nepal and Sri Lanka visit Gaya to offer ‘Pinddan’ for salvation of their ancestors’ souls.

Tourists Traffic in Gaya

Gaya is the most visited Hindu shrines in Bihar which is evident from the following diagram which exhibits the flow of domestic tourists to Gaya during the year 2001 to 2012.

Figure 3.16: Domestic Tourist Arrival to Gaya (2001-2012)

![Domestic Tourist Arrival to Gaya Diagram]

Source: Directorate of Tourism, Patna (Bihar), 2012.

The above figure shows the flow of domestic tourist to Gaya during 2001 and 2012. The number of tourist has gone up considerably but the pattern is not consistent. Over the period 2001 to 2012, there has been around three fold increase in the tourist footfalls in Gaya. The sharp rise in tourist strength is prominent from 2008 onwards. The foreign tourist arrivals in Gaya are presented in the following diagram:
Figure 3.17: Foreign Tourist Arrivals to Gaya (2001-2012)

Source: Directorate of Tourism, Patna (Bihar), 2012.

The above figure shows that the flow of foreign tourist to Gaya was very low up to 2007. The foreign tourist arrival witnessed remarkable growth since 2007 and touched the limit of 268832 in the year 2012. The arrival was highest in 2012.

Accessibility: Gaya is well connected to Patna, Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai and other cities of India by train. It is also well connected to Patna by road. Patna is about 100 km from Gaya. There is an international airport at Gaya.

Accommodation: Accommodation facilities of different levels are available for tourists. During the Pitrapaksha Fair, accommodation facilities are available for the pilgrims in the house of Panda, Dharamshala, hotels and in various schools where the arrangement for electricity supply, water supply lighting, and hygiene is provided by district administrations.

Amenities: There are large numbers of eating outlets, shops, ATMs etc. at Gaya. Bihar Tourism Department offers package tours for Gaya during the Pitrapaksha fair. Tourist information center is located at Gaya railway station.

3.5.2 Rajgir: Rajgir is a Hindu Pilgrimage center as well. Its name is mentioned in many ancient religious texts such as Ramayana, Mahabharata. It is mentioned in the Ramayana that Grivraja (modern Rajgir) was founded by Vasu the son of Brahma, the creator of the world(Khanna, 2003). The lord Krishna is also said to have visited Rajgir. Lord Rama is also said to have visited this place with his consort Sita and brother Laxman while they were on the way to Gaya to pray for his father. There are several kunds(pilgrimage spots) at Rajgir. These kunds are named after the name of Hindu pantheon such as: Brahma kund, Ganga-Yamuna Kund, Ganesh kund, Markandey Kund, Surya Kund, Chandrima Kund, Sita Kund, Ram-Laxman Kund,
Ahilya Kund, Gauri Kund and Vaitarni Kund and Makhdum Kund (also known as Shringi Rishi Kund). These kunds are of great religious importance and it is believed that bathing in the kunds in general and during the period of Malmas absolves the people from sins and offers moksha, peace and prosperity in life. Vsihnu-Laxmi temple is the main temple in kund area, and the other temples are Shiva temple, Jagdamba Devi temple, Hanuman temple and Sapt-rishi temple and others. The month long Malmas mela is held at Rajgir every three year. Malmas is an extra month in Hindi Calendar which comes after every three year. It is believed that during Malmas 33 crore deities reside at Rajgir and the same is mentioned in Vedas and Puranas. About one crore pilgrims visit during Malmas for taking a bath in Kund. Pilgrims visit also in large number during Sharawan i.e. during July-August of the year. Apart from this, the peak season of tourist arrival spans from October to March. Tapowan Kund is located 12 km away from Rajgir. There are four kunds in the name of four sons of Brahma and one temple of Mahadeo (Local Person, Personal Communication, December 17, 2012).

Accessibility: It is accessible by roadways and railway from Patna. It is also connected with New Delhi by the train, Sharamjeevi Express which plies daily from Rajgir to New Delhi.

Accommodation: Accommodation facilities are provided by Bihar Tourism Department, Religious trusts and Private Hotels. There is a Tourist information centre at Rajgir to provide the necessary information to the visitors. The prospective tourists may book their accommodation through Bihar State Tourism Development Corporation websites.

Amenities: The necessary tourist facilities are available at Rajgir.

3.5.3 Other Important Hindu Pilgrimage Places in Bihar

Apart from the above mentioned Hindu pilgrimage centers, there are many minor Hindu pilgrimage spot spreading across the state. These pilgrimage spots are of great religious importance but they draw pilgrims mainly from nearby area. They generally lack tourist facilities. These Hindu pilgrimage spots are:

Sitamarhi: It is one of the districts of Bihar. This place is believed to be the birthplace of Ram’s consort Sita. The place where Sita is supposed to have come out from the bowels from the earth is Sitamarhi (Roy, 1988). There are many temples associated with Shiva, Ram and Sita within the periphery of 10 km of district.
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headquarter. These are Janaki Temple, Punauradham, Shiva temple (Haleshwar Asthan) and others. Ramnavami, the birth anniversary of Ram is celebrated every year which lasts for a fortnight. A large number of local pilgrims visit on this occasion. No data is available with regard to arrival of pilgrims. Sitamarhi is located about 150 km from Patna. There is regular bus service for Sitamarhi from Patna, Muzaffarpur and other districts of Bihar. Visitors may also go by train to Muzaffarpur and from there they may take bus or private vehicle. Sitamarhi is connected with Delhi by train, Licchvi Express, which plies daily from Sitamarhi to Delhi. There are many hotels at Sitamarhi for night stay. Prospective visitors may also arrange their journey through Bihar State Tourism Development Corporation websites.

Harihar Nath Temple: The temple is located at Sonpur in Saran district of Bihar and is only 35 km from Patna. Sonepur is considered a very holy place from mythological point of view. It is believed that at this very place liberation of a mighty elephant from the jaws of alligator took place by the grace of Vishnu (Majumdar, 1974). The origin of Shiva temple known as Harihar Nath temple is shrouded in mystery. Besides Harihar Nath temple, there are also other temples such as Kali Sthan and Panch Deveta temple. Lakhs of pilgrims come to take a bath on the occasion of Kartik Purnima. On this occasion, famous Sonpur mela is also held every year and goes for a month. The Sonepur mela is famous for cattle. On this occasion lakhs of domestic tourists and hundreds of foreign tourists visit this Pilgrimage spot (Roy, 1988). Visitors may reach there either through Patna or directly to Sonepur by train. It is well connected through road and there is regular service of bus and auto from Patna. BSTDC arranges for accommodation service on the occasion of Sonpur fair. Visitors may also stay at Patna and Hajipur where a number of hotels are available.

Sultanganj: It is located in Bhagalpur district of Bihar. This place is famous for Shiva temple Ajgaibinath. Legends asserts that lord Shiva was given his bow, known as Ajgav, at this place and therefore this temple came to be known as Ajgaibinath. Besides, this place is also of historical and archeological importance because numerous ancient relics like Stupa, seals, coins, images and terrocota have been found in Sultanganj. A bronze image of Buddha was discovered in Sultanganj which is now kept in Birmingham Museum (Roy, 1988). This temple is visited by a large number of Hindu pilgrims every year.

Girija Devi Temple: It is located at Phulher village in Madhubani district of Bihar and associated with the Ram and Sita. According to legend, Ram and Sita met each
other for the first time in the vicinity of this temple while they were plucking the flowers to offer to Goddess Girija Devi. Sita used to come to the temple daily to offer prayer in this temple. The goddess Girija is the main deity of the temple. The image of goddess is 2 feet high and made of black stone. There are also images of Janaki, Ganeshji, Kaliji, Durgaji, Vishnu, and lord Shiva in this temple. Adjacent to the temple, there is a tank wherein Sita used to take a bath before prayer. Hundred of visitors visit the temple daily which turns into thousands during the month of Phalgun. Pilgrims from Nepal also visit this pilgrimage spot (Roy, 1988).

**Mundeshwari Temple:** It is located in Kaimur District of Bihar. This temple stands on the 600 feet high hill and represents the earliest specimen of Nagar type of Temple architecture in Bihar. The shape of this temple is octagon which is rare of its type. There is only one other example of this shape which is Shankaracharya temple in Srinagar. The main deity of the temple is goddess Mundeshwari. The Goddess Mundeshwari is a female deity having many hands and riding on buffalo. Mundeshwari temple is an oldest temple in Bihar. There is some erotic figure in the temple (Roy, 1988). This temple is very popular among locals and attracts pilgrims from nearby area. There is no data available regarding the number of visitors to this temple.

**Singheshwar Asthan:** This Hindu pilgrimage spot is located in Madhepura District of Bihar. This is famous for an ancient Shiva temple. This temple is visited by local pilgrims from the District and adjoining districts. According to the legend, the Putrayeshti Yagna for King Dasharath was performed at this place by Sringa Rishi. Consequently King Dasharath was blessed with four sons. This legend is asserted by the regular visit of a large number of barren women for offering puja here. A month-long fair is held on the occasion of “Shivaratri” every year. According to tourist statistics of Bihar government more than one lakh pilgrims visit this temple annually. BSTDC runs a hotel ‘Singheswar Sthan’ to cater the need of visitors.

**Sun Temple (Nalanda):** This temple is one km north to Ruins of Nalanda University. Pilgrims visit the temple to worship sun god. They come with different motivations such as to get cured of physical ailments particularly skin diseases and to get blessed with the child. On every Sunday thousands of Pilgrims visit the temple and in the month of kartik and Chaitra(a month of Hindi Calendar) the number of devotees turns into lakhs (Priest, Personal Communication, December 18, 2012).

The above mentioned Hindu pilgrimage spots are not the exhaustive list of the
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Hindu pilgrimage spots of Bihar. Rather these are those which are historically important and religiously more famous. Besides, there are also hundred of local pilgrimage spots like Sheetala Devi temple, Bari and Choti Patan Devi, Hanuman Mandir in Patna, Sun temple(Aurangabad), Revelganj(Saran) and in other districts of Bihar. These local pilgrimage spots are the centre of day to day religious activities and provide source of income for locals in many ways.

3.6 Sufi Pilgrimage Places in Bihar

The advent of Sufism in Bihar dates back to 13th century when Muslim colonization started in Bihar. As the Sufism is categorized in orders, hence there is no unanimity about its number. There are many orders of Sufism in India out of which some are very popular. These are Chisti, Qadaria, Suharwardi and Naqshbandi. The Sufi saints of Bihar belonged to different orders like Chisti, Suharwardia, Qadaria, Naqshbandi. But most important Sufi order of Bihar is Firdausia order represented by Sharfuddin Yahya Maneri. It is the sub section of Suharwardi order. The adherents of Firdausia Silsilah, the Sufi order, are spread over Pakistan, Bangladesh, England, and USA in addition to those in Bihar and west Bengal(Paul Jackson, 2007). In Bihar the Qadri order was represented by Syed Muhammad of Amjharsharif (Aurangabad), Bihar.

The development of Sufism in Bihar led to the establishment of 'khanqahs' by eminent Sufi saints. Khanqah is a residential complex which usually houses several buildings and contains tombs of Sufis, mosque, and educational centers along with sacred relics. The khanqah caters to the social and spiritual need of the society. Besides, preserving and promoting the Islamic culture it also aims at spreading equity, peace, brotherhood and harmony in the society. The people visit the Khanqah for seeking solution of different social problems. These places are visited by all without any discrimination of caste, creed and religion. These holy places attract the people with a host of motivations. People visit shrines of Muslim tombs to offer Fateha, to ask for help, to give thank and to solve their mundane problems. The Muslim shrines witness regular flow of devotees throughout the year and it turns into crowd during special event such as 'URS' ceremony. The cultural landscape of Bihar is dotted with the shrines and Khanqahs affiliated to different Sufi orders. Out of these some are very popular and revered and visited by a large number of people. Here the study highlights major Sufi Pilgrimage centers of Bihar.
3.6.1 Manersharif: Manersharif is the most important and oldest centre of Sufism in Bihar. There are tombs of two famous Sufi saints and khanqah at Manersharif. The one is of Hazrat Makhdum Shah Daulat Maneri(RA) whereas the other one is of Sheikh Yahiya Maneri. Sheikh Yahiya Maneri was the father of Sharfuddin Maneri. The tomb of Yahiya Maneri and Shah Daulat are locally known as Bari Dargah and Choti Dargah respectively. There is a mosque in the compound of Bari Dargah. The tomb of Yahiya Maneri was visited by first Mughal emperor Babur and king of Lodi dynasty, Sultan Sikandar Lodi(Paul Jackson,2003). The Khanqah contains many sacred spots and sacred articles. The sacred spots of Khanqah are the birth place of Makhdoom Sharfuddin Yahiya Maneri(RA), the spot where his mother used to offer prayer and the spot where Makhdoom Yahiya Maneri(RA) appeared before his mother from the Bihinya(where he was meditating and wandering). Bihinya is a place in Ara district of Bihar.

An imposing mausoleum contains the tomb of Hazrat Makhdum Shah Daulat Maneri(RA). Four minarets stand at the four corners of the mausoleum. The verses of Quran are inscribed on the walls of mausoleum. There is a mosque in the Dargah compound. This mausoleum is the finest example of Mughal architecture not only in Bihar but also in the entire eastern region of India. The mausoleum was made up of Chunar sandstone and resembles to the Jahangiri Mahal in Agra fort, Agra. The then governor of Bihar Ibrahim khan got this mausoleum built in first quarter of 17th century. It was the first tomb in Bihar to be enlisted in the archeological survey of India report, 1931. The Urs is celebrated for three days on 10th, 11th and 12th of Shaban(a month of Islamic Calendar) at Bari Dargah and on 14th of Zeeqada(a month of Islamic Calendar) at Chhoti Dargah.

Accessibility: Manersharif is located about 32 km west of Patna along the Patna-Ara highway in Patna district. There is no direct transportation service available. The visitors go there by hiring the passenger vehicle from Patna or they may arrange their trip through BSTDC.

Accommodation: At present there is no facility for night stay. The tourist dacekunglaw is under construction. Visitors may stay at Patna where many hotels are available. On the occasion of annual Urs, lodging and food services are provided in Khanqah.

Amenities: There is one tourist cafeteria of BSTDC where the visitors may have refreshment or lunch. There are also many Dhabas and sweet shops at Manersharif.
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The visitors may acquire information about the site by going through the inscribed plate or by asking the Khadim of Dargahs. The other tourist amenities are not adequate.

3.6.2 Phulwarisharif: This pilgrimage spot is associated with prominent Sufi saint Hazrat Pir Mujibullah Qadiri. He established the Khanaqah in the 18th century known as Khanqah Mujibia, also known as Bari Khanqah. It has been the centre of Islamic culture and contributed in the socio-cultural development of the society. It commands and controls the religious and social affairs of Muslims in Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha. The Khanqah contains a centre of education i.e., Madarsa Dar-ul-Ulum Mujibia and a grand mosque and tomb of Hazrat Pir Mujibullah Qadiri. The people of different faith visit this pilgrimage spot for Ziyarat of the Dargah sharif. People also come to meet Sajjadasheen of Khanqah and share their mundane problems and seek their solution from him. People are allowed to meet Sajjadasheen in his Huzra only on appointed time. The Urs is celebrated every year on 12th of Rabiul-awwal (a month of Islamic Calendar). The sacred hair of the beard (Mue-Mubarak) of Prophet Hazarat Muhammad (PBUH) is displayed for public viewing on 11th of every Islamic month and on the occasion of Urs. Data regarding the arrival of visitors is not available. According to one official of Khanqah about one and half lakh visitors attend the Urs ceremony every year and every month hundreds of devotees visit for the Ziyarat of Mue-Mubarka on this particular day. There are many tombs of Sufi saints in Phulwari Sharif like the tomb of Minhazuddin Rasti and Bibi Jamal, the lady Sufi saint. But there is lack of historical evidences of these tombs as mentioned by Paul Jackson(2003). The Urs is held on 28th of Zilhijja (a month of Islamic Calendar) at the Dargha of Minhazuddin Rasti (RA) and a large gathering occurs on this occasion.

Accessibility: This Sufi pilgrimage spot is located in Patna and is only seven km away from Patna Railway Station. Patna is well connected by road and rail and Phulwarisharif is easily approachable from anywhere in Patna by Auto and Rickshaw.

Accommodation: There is guesthouse in Khanqah for night stay. There is also good number of hotels available in Patna.

Amenities: The tourist amenities are not adequate at these Sufi pilgrimage sites.

3.6.3 The Khanqah Emadia Qalandaria: The Sufi centre is located in the Patna city. The Khanqah Emadia Qalandaria was established by Hazrat Syed Khwaja Emaduddin Qalandar alias Mian Sahab (RA). He was one of the greatest Sufi saints of Bihar. His tomb lies inside the khanqah. Hazrat Khwaja Emaduddin Qalandar was
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the disciple or Murid of Hazrat Fazil Qalandar of Sadhor, Haryana. Hazrat Pir Mujeebullah Qadri Rahmatullah Alaih was the first disciple of Hazrat Khwaja Emauddin Qalandar. Every year Urs is held at Khanqah Emadia. There is no record available regarding the arrival of visitors. According to Sajjadanasheen, thousands of Visitors from India as well as from different countries like, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Saudi Arab and NRI from America, Canada and Austria visit this Sufi centre throughout the year. Urs is celebrated at this sufi centre on 24th and 25th of Muharram(a month of Islamic Calendar) and on 1st -12th Rabiul-awwal(a month of Islamic Calendar). Different cultural programmes are organized on the occasion of Urs.

3.6.4 Mittan Ghat: This 18th century Sufi centre is located in Patna city. This place is named after mullah Mitan. He was contemporary of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb and the teacher of prince Azimussahan(grandson of Aurangzeb). Mittan Ghat is the site of two Dargahs and a Khanqah. The khanqah contains the tomb of Shah Munim Pak, Madarsa Jamia Munimia and a library. The library has 26000 printed books, 1000 manuscripts on Sufism, comparative studies of religion and society in Urdu, Hindi, English, Arabic and Persian language. He was the great Sufi saint of Abul-ulai school of Sufism. He was the disciple of Maulana Shah Farhad in Delhi his Murids are spread over Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. The second Dargah of Mittan Ghat contains the tomb of Shah Rukh-I-Alauddin Ishq. Besides, there are many tombs of Sufi saints in close locality (Paul Jackson, 2003). There is a double-storey mosque in Khanqah built by Mugal prince Azim. This mosque has distinction of being only double-storey mosque of Mughal period in Bihar. There is no data available regarding the arrival of visitors but according to Sajjadanasheen of this Khanqah throughout the year thousand of devotees visit this Khanqah from different countries of Indian subcontinent to pay the homage and tribute to the Sufi. He further said that everyday 2-3 hundred visitors visit this Sufi center and 75 per cent of visitors from India are non-Muslim. Every year Urs celebration is held on 11th and 12th of Rajab(a month of Islamic Calendar). Hazrat Munimpak National Research Centre for Sufism and Comparative Religion is going to be established. All the proceedings have been completed and fund has been allocated. It will be the first institution in the world on Sufism and Comparative Studies of Religion. The institution will be perhaps inaugurated in 2013.
Accessibility: These Sufi pilgrimage sites in Patna are well connected by rail, road and air. As far as local transportation is concerned this place is accessible by auto Rickshaw and other vehicles from railway Station, bus stand and airport.

Accommodation: Accommodation is available for limited number of visitors in Khanqah. Besides, there are a number of hotels available in Patna. Two guest houses were under construction one each for ladies and gents at Khanqah Emadia.

Amenities: The tourist amenities are not adequate at these Sufi pilgrimage sites.

3.6.5 Biharsharif: It is the districts headquarter of Nalanda district. It has also been the centers of Sufi saints in 14th century and the culture of Sufism persists till today. Here, the tomb of many prominent Muslim Sufi saints (Makhudum Sharfuddin Yahya Maneri, Pir Badruddin Badar Alam Zahidi, Hazrat Makhudum Sultan Ahmad Charamposh and others) are located. The place where the tombs of Sharfuddin Maneri and his mother are located is known as locally Bari Dargah. The annual Urs is celebrated every year on the 5th of Shawal(a month of Islamic Calendar). On this occasion a big fair is held for two weeks. Pilgrims and tourists from Bihar, outside Bihar and from the other countries visit on this occasion. There is a khanaqah, known as Khanqah Muazzam, half km away from Bari Dargah. The tomb of Pir Badruddin Badar Alam Zahidi is locally known as Chhoti Dargah. Urs is held at Chhoti Dargah on 25th of Rajab (a month of Islamic Calendar). Data is not available regarding the arrival of visitors. According to members of Khanqah hundreds of people visit daily and on the occasion of Urs more than one Lakh people visit.

Accessibility: Bihar Sharif is well connected by road to Patna and other towns.

Accommodation: Accommodation is available in Khanqah for visitors. There are a number of hotels available in Bihar Sharif.

Amenities: The tourist amenities are not good.

3.6.6 Makhdoom Kund, Rajgir: This Sufi pilgrimage spot is located in Rajgir. This place is associated with Sharuddin Yahiya Maneri, the great Sufi saint of Bihar. There are two spots and a warm kund. The first spot is a cave where Maneri(RA) used to live and the second spot is at the top of hill where he used to offer prayer. Both spots are worth visiting. The second spot is also marked by blood stain. Now this place has turned into tourist spot where people visit to take bath in the kund. There is a separate bathing arrangement for male and female.

Accessibility: It is well connected by road to different cities in Bihar.
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Accommodation: The facility for night stay and catering is available at Kund complex. There are also several hotels and tourist bungalows of BSTDC where visitors may stay.

Amenities: There are many shops of religious articles (flowers, sweets, agarbatti etc), tea stall and restaurants at the entrance of Makhdum kund catering the need of visitors.

Besides the above mentioned Sufi pilgrimage centers there are a large number of dargahs of Sufi saints and khanqahs of the different Sufi orders in Bihar. These draw visitors from nearby areas. The Urs are celebrated with much enthusiasm; fair is held and thus provides economic opportunities to the locals. Some of the Dargahs spread across Bihar are Tomb of Mulla Muhammad Said Pir Pahar (Munger District), Hazrat Jandaha, Serukahi (Vaishali District), Kanti, Data Kambal Sah Pakki Sarai (Muzaffarpur District), Goraul Sharif (Sitamarhi District), Saran Khas (Saran District), Hasanpura (Siwan District), Lakri Dargah (Gopalganj District) Masurhi (Bhojpur District), Kako (Jehanabad District), Siris (Aurangabad District), Tomb of Chandan Shahid (Rohtas District) etc.

The foregoing discussion enlightens about Bihar and its pilgrimage spots associated with Buddhism, Jainism, Hinduism, Sikhism and Sufism. It also highlights the importance of the pilgrimage spots from historical and religious perspectives. The tourist facility available at major pilgrimage destination has been mentioned and the arrival of foreign and domestic tourists at various tourist places in Bihar has also been presented in diagrammatic and descriptive form. The detailed discussion and description helps in understanding the importance of pilgrimage spots and offers guidance to prospective visitors about the location, accessibility and facilities for stay at the major pilgrimage destinations in Bihar. The next chapter is devoted to focus on management of pilgrimage tourism in Bihar.
REFERENCES


